

TOWN OF ARLINGTON



PARK COMMISSIONERS
Jen Rothenberg, Chairperson
Shirley Canniff, Vice Chair
Leslie Mayer
Donald Vitters
Elena Bartholomew
Peter Hedlund, Associate
Crissy Tarantino, Associate

Recreation Department

Park and Recreation Commission
Minutes
Monday, June 27, 2016
Arlington Senior Center

The Park and Recreation Commission came to order at 7:00 PM for its meeting in the Arlington Senior Center on Monday June 27, 2016.

Members in attendance included: Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff, Elena Bartholomew Leslie Mayer, Don Vitters, and Associate Members Peter Hedlund and Crissy Tarantino. Interim Recreation Director Jim Feeney and Recreation Supervisor Erin Campbell were also present.

Members from the public: Darcey Devney, R.M. Kuhn, Kevin Sanders, David Bean, Laura Frost, Anthony Vogel

Open Forum – Public Comments

Darcey Devney first thanked the commission for rotating the basketball court to minimize the noise to the neighbors. She then asserted there was a lack of communication and notice about the open meetings for the Magnolia Park project. She stated that 28 people attended the first meeting, none of whom were abutters, and only 3 people attended the last open meeting. She also voiced her concerns that there will be one half of the open space there used to be. Ms. Devney stated the neighbors were not notified until the notice for the Conservation Commission hearing. She closed out her remarks by asking that the basketball half-court be removed to provide more open space.

David Bean, a current user of the Magnolia Community Garden stated he likes trees, has a Dawn Redwood in his own backyard and he's fearful that the tree issue is going to derail that whole project. He said the shade and roots from the Dawn Redwood at Magnolia are a disaster for the gardeners.

Laura Frost, another current user of the Magnolia Community Garden, stated she attended the original open meetings about the Magnolia Park renovation project and stated that the attendance numbers tapered off in the subsequent meetings because input had been given, drawings were done and just needed to be approved. She stated that the online comments about the Dawn Redwood make it seem like the gardeners hate trees. Ms. Frost said the commission has to decide what to do with the space - either have a community garden or not because they need sunlight.

Approval of Minutes

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The minutes from May 24th and June 14th were tabled because a commissioner had trouble editing them in the format provided.

Special Requests

Friends of Robbins Farm Park Musical Events: July 14, August 13, August 27 (2 events). Anthony Vogel, representative of Friends of Robbins Farm Park, presented four different events at Robbins Farm to take place this summer.

July 14: Harvard Alumni Jazz Band – 8 or 9th year of the event, no food to be sold. Ms. Bartholomew suggested carry-in, carry-out policy- to be advertised on promotional posters - to cut down on trash in the park.

Ms. Canniff motioned to approve, Ms. Mayer seconded. Approved 5-0.

August 13: Classical Concert – This is another annual event. There will be no tent this year, August 14th rain date. The commission stated that carry-in, carry-out would again be a stipulation of approval.

Ms. Mayer motioned to approve, Mr. Vitters seconded. Approved 5-0.

August 27: Rockin' Robbins Concert followed by Arlington Short Animation Film Festival –Packaged food and drinks will be available for purchase. Recyclables will be collected during the event and disposed of after. The commission discussed the approval process of the films to make sure they are family friendly.

Ms. Bartholomew motioned to approve both events with the stipulation the selected films (titles and descriptions) are provided to the commission for final approval.

Ms. Canniff seconded. Approved 5-0.

The commission warned Mr. Vogel about possible construction on Robbins Farm for summer 2017.

Kevin Sanders - Hill's Hill - July 29 - Redeeming Grace Church Movie Night

Mr. Sanders, representing Redeeming Grace Church, proposed a movie night at Hill's Hill field. The church will use an outside company to provide the movie (The Lego Movie), screen, generator, additional lights and technical support. The commission suggested moving the location to McClennen Park because Hill's Hill is too secluded, dark and not easily accessible at night.

Ms. Bartholomew motioned to approve the Redeeming Grace Movie Night at McClennen field, behind the playground, with the carry-in, carry-out policy. Mr. Feeney will tell Mr. Sanders if the field is too wet for the contracted company to drive on the field to unload their equipment. Ms. Mayer seconded. Approved 5-0.

Capital Updates

Magnolia Park Project: Mr. Hedlund of Hedlund Design Group presented the commission with the update.

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Mr. Hedlund passed around pictures Mr. Vitters had taken at different points in the day that show the shadow of the Dawn Redwood trees. The existing map of the park was presented showing 47 existing trees. The original proposal was to take out five trees in close proximity to the garden and the garden expansion area. Mr. Hedlund explained the original plan presented to the Conservation Commission for approval – to take out the 30” caliper Dawn Redwood and keep the two smaller 12” and 24” caliper Dawn Redwoods.

Mr. Hedlund then reported to the commission the outcome of the Conservation Commission hearing on June 16, 2016 at 8:45pm. He said there were numerous community members in attendance who spoke out to save the tree, and one garden supporter who spoke about battling the Dawn Redwood roots inside the garden. The Conservation Commission approved the plan with the exception of the garden expansion – they needed more information to make a decision.

Mr. Hedlund then showed a 1985 planting plan which showed that all three Dawn Redwoods were planted at the same time making them all (30”, 24” and 12”) 30 to 31 years old at most. Mr. Hedlund then showed a 1982 plan called “Parking and Fence Revision” which was created during the Alewife T expansion and gave the gardens a new fence and water source. This indicates the garden predated the dawn redwoods.

The commission discussed the Conservation Commission meeting and the online petition to save the 30” caliber tree. Mr. Hedlund explained the options the commission has if they choose to go back to the Conservation Commission on July 14th.

Option A: Resubmit the original plan - Expand the gardens to the west, 32 plots now, only 26 are useable. This would expand the garden to 48 plots plus 6 raised beds that would be ADA compliant. Remove the 30” Dawn Redwood, keep the 24” and 12”.

Option B: Leave 30” Dawn Redwood at the center of the garden, remove the 12”, keep the 24”. Garden would be expanded and plots would be moved so there would be a 30’x30’ buffer zone around the 30” Dawn Redwood and it would be limbed up.

Mr. Hedlund said this plan is a compromise and wouldn’t alleviate all of the shade and root problems in the gardens.

Option C: Keep the existing fence line of the gardens; rework the plots so there would be 31 plus 6 raised for a total of 37 plots. Keep all Dawn Redwoods but still remove the sweet gum and the apple tree. New drainage would be installed but shade and root issues would remain.

The commission discussed all three options and stated that the community garden was a big priority when they were designing the park since it is the only community garden in town. The best option needs to be selected for all the users of the park and the community as a whole.

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The commission talked about the timeline and potential additional costs if the project was delayed, but ultimately decided not to make any decisions to rush based on the timeline. Ms. Mayer stated that since this project doesn't affect fields or schools there is more flexibility. Ms. Rothenberg said she cannot support a plan that has such a large tree in the middle of the garden. All information about Dawn Redwoods says the root systems are aggressive and wreak havoc on gardens and paths. Ms. Rothenberg added that this park likely will not get touched for another 50 years, so the commission needs to think long term. The commission agreed that leaving the garden as it exists would not be right, especially considering the increasing popularity in community gardens. Ms. Mayer also agreed and stated that people were misinformed that the 30" Dawn Redwood was a rare or endangered tree. She said the commission is not anti-tree; they planned the Thorndike OLRA park around a tree because it made sense - it does not make sense to leave the tree in this case.

Ms. Devney stated that the commission cannot ignore the 400 signatures on the petition and brought up the lack of notification to the abutters. Ms. Rothenberg stated they sent out the abutters notice about the open meeting at Hardy Elementary School to all abutters within 500 feet, even though only 200 feet is required.

The commission talked about contacting the Tree Committee and DPW to see if they could help add trees in addition to those trees to be planted under the contract in order to get to a 1:1 tree caliper replacement.

The commission discussed having the broken red maple tree evaluated to see if it could be removed from the caliber count since it has two large trunks. The commission also discussed taking down the 12" Dawn Redwood to give the 24" Dawn Redwood more room to grow and thrive. Mr. Hedlund stated that Sacca recommended taking down the 12" and the original bid included the expense to take down all three Dawn Redwoods, though the commission had reconsidered the original plan and decided to keep the smaller two.

The commission conversed about clarifying the plan and including all additional new information in any proposal before the Conservation Commission. They also discussed prioritizing the tree plantings in the meadow area.

Ms. Mayer motioned in support of Option A with the addition of the proposed removal of the 12" Dawn Redwood, as well as prioritizing and pursuing the meadow tree planting add alternate. Ms. Canniff seconded. Approved 5-0.

Robbins Farm: Mr. Vitters said he continues to work on the Robbins project schedule.

Commission Topic Leader Discussion

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Recreation Updates - Mr. Feeney said he has been addressing complaints about the portable restrooms in Town. The contractor did not have a few of the locations on the service schedule. He was alerted by the Health Department that hypodermic needles were found in the North Union portable restroom.

Capital - Mr. Vitters reviewed the timeline of upcoming capital projects.

Policies and Procedures - Ms. Rothenberg stated that the commission should move towards the carry-in, carry-out policy for park permits to help alleviate trash removal, especially since pizza boxes do not fit in the park receptacles.

ADA - No report at this time.

Special Events - No report at this time.

Field Management – Ms. Bartholomew spoke about the condition of the infield at the Bishop Elementary School and spoke to DPW about getting someone down there to turn the infield to make it softer. Right now it is too hard and it is a safety issue for the players.

Off Leash Park and Program – No report at this time.

Friends of Parks – No report at this time.

Open Space - No report at this time.

Funding Opportunities – No report at this time.

Technology and Web Management – No report at this time.

DPW - No report at this time.

Other

Ms. Bartholomew suggested posting a progress letter at Magnolia Park until July 14th stating progress is pending the outcome of the Conservation Commission hearing.

Ms. Mayer motioned to adjourn, Ms. Bartholomew seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 pm

Respectfully Submitted:

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